



SPEAK UP FOR
LANGUAGE INCLUSION

Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals: how to leave no one behind, whatever language they speak



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**What is language inclusion
and why does it matter?**

What is language inclusion and why does it matter?

The world speaks [7,000 languages](#). Yet the top [6 million](#) internet searches yield English language websites. You might conclude that the internet has a language inclusion problem. The [four billion](#) speakers of non-colonial languages are dangerously underrepresented, locked out of vital conversations that matter to them. Let's be clear. It's not just an internet issue. It's an inclusion and equality issue. Inequality is growing [for more than 70% of the global population](#). We'll share with you how we've seen the language inclusion problem affect people who face exclusion at many levels, and how we can take practical steps to speak up and help make marginalized voices heard.

Language inclusion means recognizing linguistic diversity, respecting it, and promoting multilingualism to ensure no one is left behind. At CLEAR Global, it's the core of our mission: making sure people can get vital information and be heard, whatever language they speak. And it's absolutely essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 Agenda. This call to action by all UN Member States aims to “end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere.” By promoting language inclusion, we're taking steps toward a more inclusive and equitable world. With [CLEAR Global's](#) innovative language technology solutions, research, and the [Translators without Borders \(TWB\) community](#) of over 100,000 language volunteers, we are set to help achieve the SDGs.





The detrimental impact of language exclusion

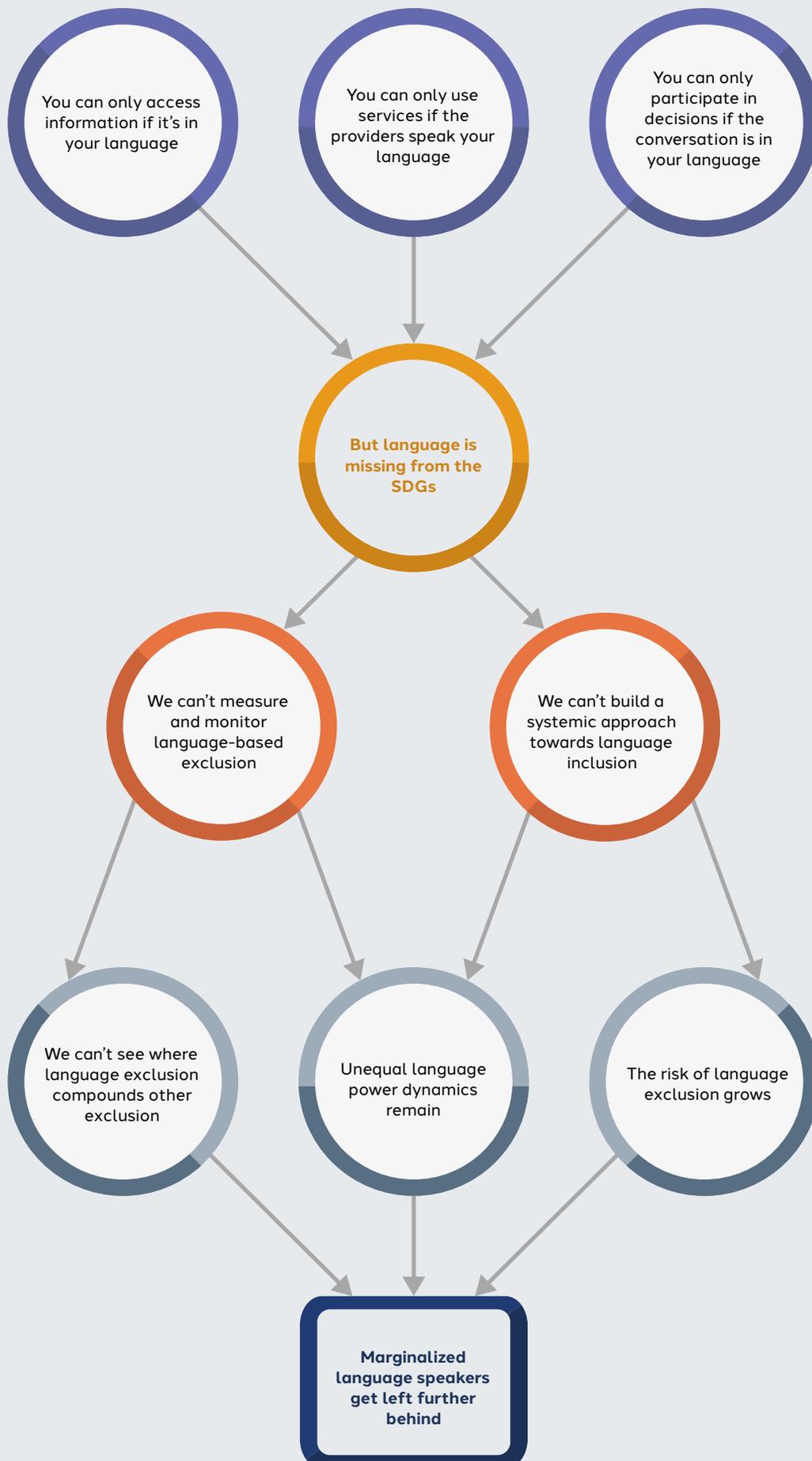
Language exclusion affects people's lives, well-being and development because it reinforces existing social, political and economic inequalities. The people most disadvantaged or excluded by language include those at risk of poverty, women and girls, people with disabilities, older adults, and minorities. And as the world becomes more and more digitized, the digital language divide poses an even greater threat to achieving access and inclusion for all. As this divide continues to lock billions out of important information and development opportunities, we urgently need to act on language exclusion to ensure we reach those most excluded.

Language inclusion - the key to the Sustainable Development Goals

“Accelerating progress for those most left behind” – that’s the commitment made by all UN states in the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda. Yet millions of people still can’t access basic services, claim their rights, or participate in decisions affecting their lives – all because they speak the ‘wrong’ language.

To make inclusion a reality, language awareness is crucial. With the power of language inclusion, we can help reduce inequalities (SDG 10) by empowering marginalized groups and individuals to participate fully in society and access information, services and opportunities in their preferred language. We can help empower women and girls (SDG 5), especially in contexts where they face discrimination or exclusion because of the language they speak. With the right policies, practices and technologies that respect and listen to diverse, marginalized voices, language inclusion is achievable.

Why language matters





Climate change

and language inclusion



Climate change and language inclusion

At CLEAR Global, we help people in climate crises get vital information and be heard, whatever language they speak.

The problem?

People need information to protect themselves from climate catastrophes.

The [climate crisis](#) (SDG 13) is the world's most urgent sustainability challenge - yet those most impacted are often the least able to **speak out**. As the climate crisis deepens, we need climate solutions created by and for people most at risk of climate-related disaster. Between 2010-2020, people in highly vulnerable regions experienced [15 times more deadly hazards](#) from extremes in climate such as floods, droughts and storms. Approximately [3.3-3.6 billion people](#) live in the most affected places in Africa, South Asia, South and Central America, and small island states. These are highly multilingual contexts. And some of the hardest-hit communities face some of the highest levels of language exclusion, compounding increasingly urgent climate threats.

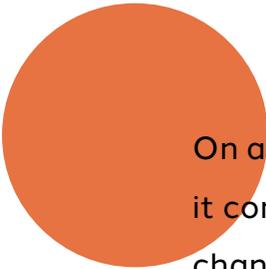
Language inclusion can help people prepare for and act on the effects of climate change. But the language problem is complex. Many scientific reports and climate messages are still [written in English only](#), which limits access to climate action for people who speak another language. Worse, these conversations exclude minority communities with valuable sustainable farming [knowledge for effective climate change mitigation](#). Their exclusion deprives us of their ancestral wisdom, hindering efforts for sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation.

We should pay attention to local languages and insights that are crucial to making solutions work for people. And we need to facilitate effective, constructive climate dialogue across languages by knowing how people talk about the environment in their language. Take for example the Inuit word '[sila](#),' which means both 'weather' and 'consciousness.' Bringing those most affected into decision-making on climate change involves supporting language communities to develop their own terminology around climate change and its impacts, based on existing concepts.

Even for English speakers, communicating on climate change brings its own challenges. For marginalized language speakers, jargon, unexplained technical terms and ineffective delivery of messages compounds the access problem. A sharp rise in communication barriers over the last decade, with [more fake news and growing climate news fatigue](#), contributes to the issue. To address the challenges of climate communication, we should connect people with locally-relevant, clear, accurate, and up-to-date information in their language. We must ensure the voices of marginalized speakers - especially from communities facing the worst climate impacts - are central for an inclusive and sustainable approach to addressing climate change.

Farmers face a double threat - climate change and language exclusion in Bihar, India

In India, we have seen these issues prevent farmers from accessing vital information and services to help them cope with climate change. On a global level, language exclusion prevents individuals from understanding and participating in conversations around climate change.



On a local level, it means farmers face compound difficulties when it comes to learning about the causes and consequences of climate change, adapting and adopting suitable crop varieties and irrigation practices for example, and accessing financial and practical support from the government and other agencies.

Even though Hindi is the most widely spoken language in India, it's poorly represented on the internet. With only [0.1% of the top 10 million websites in Hindi](#), speakers cannot find the information they're looking for. With a lack of digital infrastructure and literacy in many parts, we must consider each community's specific information and communication needs.



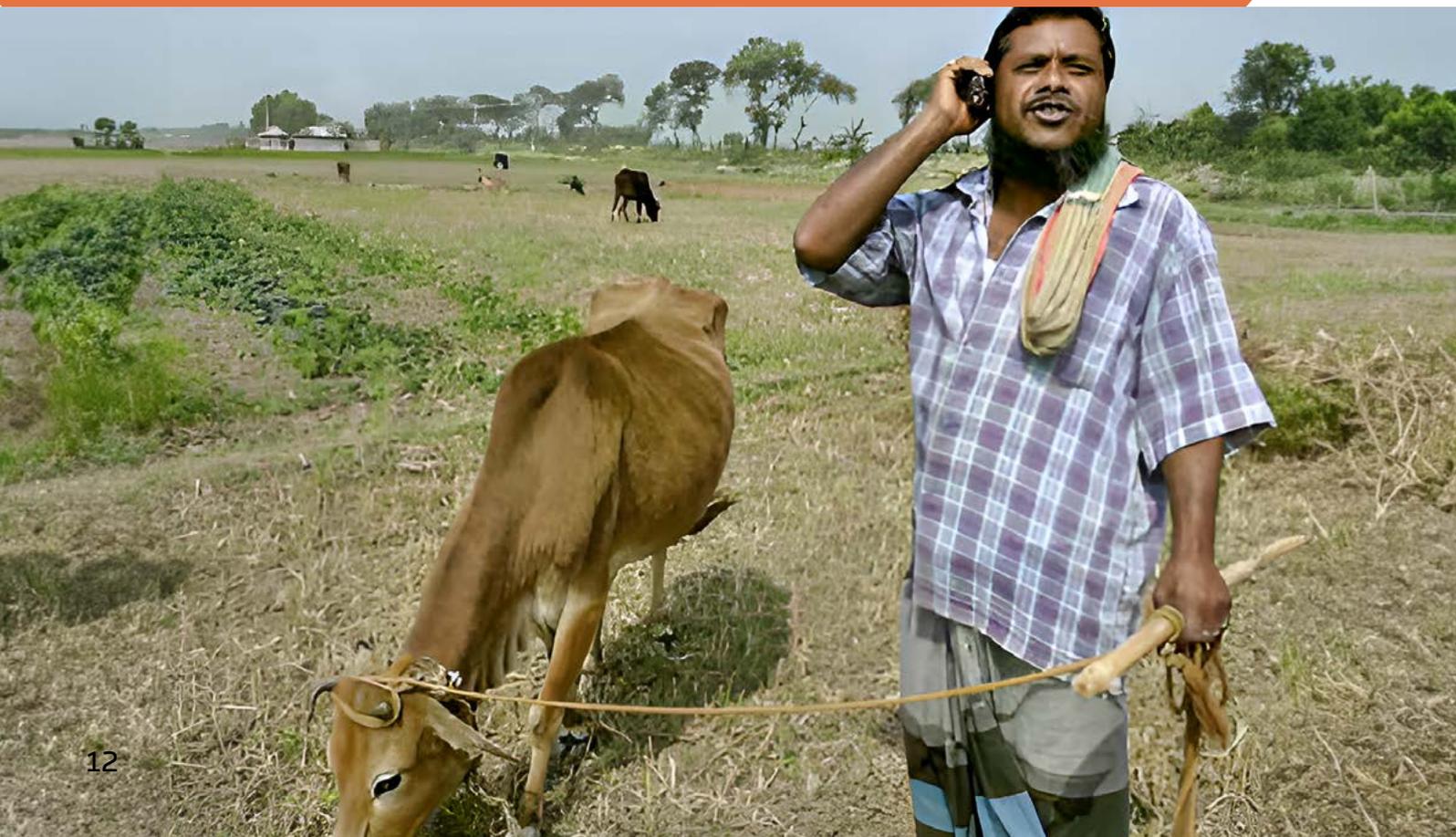
A [2020 report by Reuters](#) found that a third of people sampled use Facebook and other social media for local news and information. Across social media, potentially untrustworthy information - misinformation - presents a real danger. With access to information scarce, some [may not see the relevance or urgency of climate change for their own lives](#).

CLEAR Global works with local organizations, such as [Gram Vaani](#), to support farmers in Bihar. Climate change deeply affects their lives and livelihoods. Many farmers in rural India who speak a Hindi dialect do not have access to reliable and relevant information in their own languages. 87% of the farmers have their own phones, but they struggle to get the information they want. 87% say they get most of their information from other farmers, and 13% are informed by the agriculture department. Most mentioned that they need up-to-date information on agriculture seasons, weather predictions, rainfall predictions, agri-inputs and practices to overcome climate change challenges. The community is concerned about their livelihood with the changing climate. Farmers want to learn how to become resilient, mitigate risk, and access new opportunities. climate change and join the discourse around environmental issues.

By providing climate change information in formats and languages that work for them, we can help people understand climate change and the actions they can take to prepare and protect themselves. Language technology solutions like using voice data can enable farmers to get useful information and solutions in their own languages. This is how we start important conversations.

What we've done about it

One way to address the language exclusion problem is to use innovative technologies to bridge the communication gap between the farmers and the information providers. This is where CLEAR Global aims to shift the power balance, putting people at the center of solutions that work for them. Because while development is digitizing, half the world remains offline. With the internet largely only available in 'power languages' like English, French and Spanish, those who speak a marginalized language, especially those in remote areas, experience barriers to technology such as network coverage, language and accessibility. We can overcome these barriers with human-centered solutions. As the digital language gap widens, it is our responsibility to ensure we are investing in language-aware solutions created for those who need them most. Using human-centered design can help us not only understand, but also respond to users' language needs and preferences.





TILES:

**a platform that
allows users to access
multilingual content in
voice format**



TILES: a platform that allows users to access multilingual content in voice format

TILES, the touch interface for language-enabled services, is an innovative voice-enabled portable information kiosk.

We built [TILES](#), a language technology solution that responds to voice commands and gives spoken answers to farmers' questions, in Hindi. It was designed to overcome the language barriers that often prevent farmers in rural India from accessing vital information and services to help them cope with climate change. We worked with Gram Vaani Community Media, an award winning Indian social tech enterprise on this project, with a pilot and testing in Bihar, India. After asking local farmers, the team identified 227 relevant questions, developed informative answers, and did field-testing with users. We finally implemented TILES to share relevant information on climate change awareness, impact and adaptation among farmers.

This is a solution that we can scale, adapting to different communities' communication needs and contexts, to improve information access for all. An advantage in the face of connectivity issues, the kiosk can be placed anywhere that people gather. It could run on various electricity options like battery, solar, or wall socket, and doesn't necessarily need internet access. *"In the age of Alexa or GoogleHome, that doesn't seem revolutionary. But in rural parts of Bihar, India, a device that recognizes spoken Hindi, doesn't require an internet connection and responds to your questions feels like an alien dropping out of the sky."* – **Aimee Ansari, Chief Executive Officer, CLEAR Global**



The results

The results of our pilot project in Bihar, India, show it was well received by the farmers, who found it relevant, accurate and easy to use. Tools like this give hope for improving farmers' resilience against climate change for some of the world's most marginalized and remote people. We tested it with farmers in local agriculture, seeds, pesticides and electronics shops, and they asked questions like *"What is the benefit of the farmer by testing the soil of the field?"* and *"What is the plan of the government to protect the farmers from the damages caused by climate change?"*

What did the farmers think of the solution?

87% said TILES answered their questions correctly

61% found the information relevant

95% said they'd use the system again

70% said they'd spread the word.

About our users: 200 people, including 30 interview respondents. 90% of users were men, 75% between the ages of 18-45

By using innovative platforms, we can enable more people to access content that suits their language needs and preferences.

Voice technology empowers those who cannot read, write, or who find traditional technology confusing or overwhelming. Tools that don't require internet access can bring the most marginalized and remote communities into the conversation. With these solutions, we can build more equitable access to vital information, and help achieve [SDG 13](#), equipping people to take urgent action to cope with climate change and its impacts.



**Health care for all -
leave no language behind**

Health care for all - leave no language behind

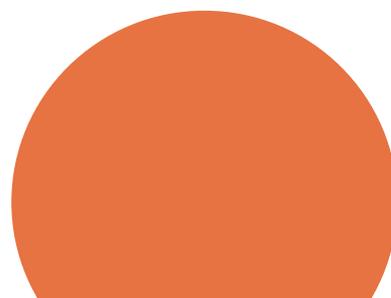
At CLEAR Global, we help people to get lifesaving health care information and be heard, whatever language they speak.

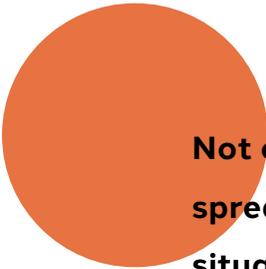
The problem?

Good health care and well-being is a right for all, but it's not accessible for all language speakers.

Language is critical for achieving [SDG 3](#), universal health coverage, and access to safe and affordable medicines and vaccines for all. In 2021, [four and a half billion people](#) were not fully covered by essential health services, and [25 million children](#) missed out on important immunizations. Inequalities persist, and exclusion disproportionately impacts the health and well-being of marginalized populations worldwide. We can only make universal health care a reality if we include all language speakers in conversations that affect their health.

Health care providers and aid workers struggle with what is known as “the last mile” – getting services and information to the most marginalized. For many, language exclusion compounds exclusion from basic services. People can't access health services or information if they aren't available in their language. People can't know what their medication is or how to take it if the package is unreadable. And care providers managing extreme workloads in multilingual contexts can't diagnose their patients if they don't know what word someone might use for “pain.”





Not only does a lack of information worsen health outcomes, it also spreads distrust and disinformation among people in vulnerable situations. When clear, evidenced-based health information isn't available in someone's first language, rumors, anecdotes and misinformation might be the only health information they have.

For women, poor communication may contribute to pregnancy complications and maternal death. In Malawi, a [number of studies](#) report poor communication between some health care providers and pregnant women. Language barriers are part of the reason [Indigenous women are more likely to die in childbirth and pregnancy and to lack access to maternal health services](#). [Globally, a woman dies every two minutes](#) from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Without training, research and resources in the right languages, health systems around the world fail to support already marginalized groups including women, people with disabilities, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. People risk falling through the cracks. And when the crack in universal health care coverage is 4.5 billion people wide, getting information and care into as many languages as possible is imperative.

“To bridge this gap and ensure equitable health care provision, addressing disparities is critical.” – UN



We can't treat patients properly if we don't understand their language

When over 700,000 Rohingya people fled Myanmar to [Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh](#) in 2017, TWB, now CLEAR Global, began work to support the community. Our researchers found that a lack of language skills and cultural awareness among aid workers was restricting [Rohingya refugees' access to health care and information](#). And ever since, we've been working to make change. In the complex political and humanitarian situation, inclusive language and communication practices are vital to the response.

*- Doctor, Camp 25,
Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh*

"If we do not understand the language of the patient then how can we provide treatment to them? That's why it is a high priority of course."

"As the volunteers are from the Rohingya community, we understand everything they say. They come and give us information about vaccines and communicable diseases. But when Bangladeshi people come to visit, we face problems in understanding their language."

- Female FGD participant, Camp 11, Cox's Bazar.



Our team in Bangladesh, helps to put Rohingya people at the center of the humanitarian response. We interviewed community members and service providers to understand how we can help uphold their right to access vital information and be heard. In our [2023 study](#), all participants stressed the importance of good understanding between patients and health care providers. But Rohingya people's needs often remain unmet due to inadequate resources and staff to support communication. When treating Rohingya-speaking patients, Chittagonian-speaking health care staff say understanding, translating and explaining medical terms is difficult and they lack time and support to address these challenges. Cultural differences and lower levels of health literacy among the Rohingya community can cause confusion, stress, and frustration for patients. This translates to Rohingya patients not properly understanding medicine dosage instructions, with potentially serious consequences. A lack of appropriate language and communication support like sign language interpreters means people with disabilities face even greater challenges.

By supporting inclusive solutions you can help shift power structures so people who have already faced so much trauma can feel confident and respected seeking health care. You can give people the valuable opportunity to ask questions.

“If everybody was concerned about communication and tried to improve it, the entire health sector would improve with better services.”
- Doctor, Kutupalong refugee camp, Bangladesh

“We couldn't understand any word that they said to us, and they went away without a proper explanation” a Rohingya man, whose son has severe breathing problems, told researchers after seeking help at a clinic,’ [– The New Humanitarian](#)





Language inclusion, misinformation and COVID-19

When the pandemic began, [dangerous misinformation](#) spread quickly though the refugee camps across the world, from false cures to a dangerous and frightening rumors about what happens to infected people. [Misinformation and disinformation spread in 25 different languages across at least 87 countries, including the United States](#). The impacts are widespread, including violence, deaths and injuries blamed on misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories related to miracle cures. People need accurate information via communications channels they trust.

- In Bangladesh, Rohingya people [reported negative and neutral experiences](#) and [made fewer visits](#) to health centers. A [mobile ban](#) and [information shortage](#) made it difficult for aid workers to spread safe advice.
- In Nigeria, [people refused the COVID-19 vaccine](#) because they were led to believe it was a plot to reduce the population or alter their DNA.

What we've done about it

Our language data and communication tools are used in local and global health emergencies to improve two-way communications. Better communication enables more efficient crisis response, especially in linguistically diverse communities that are often most severely affected by events such as weather pattern changes and public health emergencies. Globally, [our language dataset](#) is an invaluable resource for ensuring that communicators know what languages are appropriate.



Inclusive health

information solutions:

research and innovative

technology



Inclusive health information solutions: research and innovative technology

Research

CLEAR Global has done research on health and language exclusion in many contexts. For example, in Bangladesh, we conducted research with health care service providers and their patients to learn how good language and communication practices help to provide quality, inclusive health care services to Rohingya refugees. We used in-depth interviews and observations to develop practical actions [for health care service providers and the health sector in Cox's Bazar](#). We've also investigated Rohingya experiences and perspectives relating to culture, language, and health. And we've developed [recommendations for humanitarians](#) on engaging and communicating more effectively with the Rohingya community on health issues and services:

- Train health care providers to understand and engage with the way Rohingya think and talk about symptoms and conditions.
- Recognize the cultural importance of informal health providers and potential ways to work alongside them to improve patient outcomes.
- Interpreters and cultural mediators can help establish trust and empathy, while training on Rohingya medical terminology can help bridge communication gaps.

Innovative technology

Designed to improve communication between aid workers and the affected communities, CLEAR Global's [glossary apps](#) provide clear and accurate translations of useful terms.

Accessible on any device, online and offline, these tools help field workers listen to and better support people's access to information in some of the world's most linguistically diverse and challenging contexts.

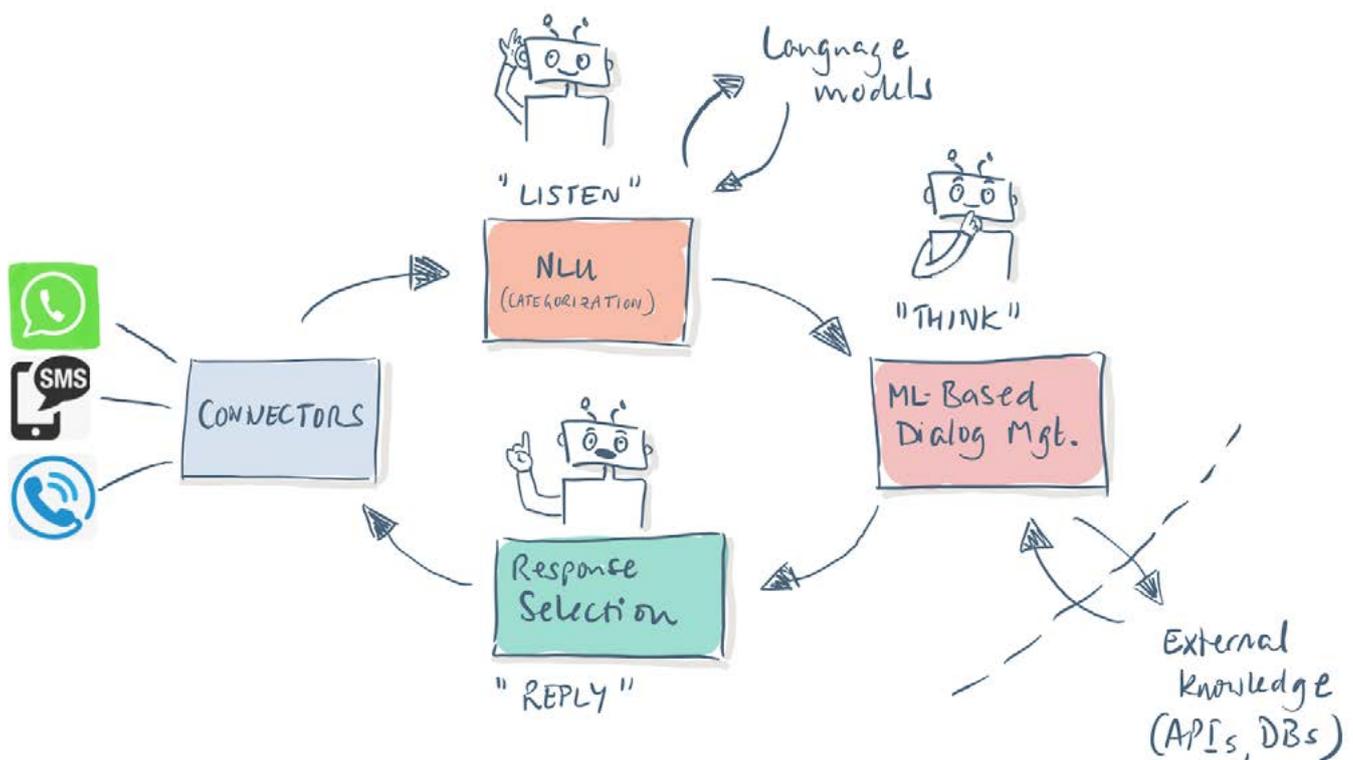
- The [Bangladesh glossary](#) is in English, Bangla, Burmese, Chittagonian, and Rohingya, with 300 terms on humanitarian aid, protection, return and relocation, health, MHPSS, gender, and more.
- The [WFP Community Engagement glossary](#) covers health care and diseases for affected communities in various contexts, with a total of 216 terms in nine languages including sign translations in Sinhala, Tamil and Chewa sign languages. The glossary was developed in collaboration with technical and sign language specialists and in consultation with WFP's accountability and protection team.
- The [COVID-19 glossary](#) identifies commonly used terminology and technical terms to develop a multilingual, plain-language glossary to assist field workers and interpreters engaging with communities to raise awareness. Available in over 60 languages, and in audio format.

Our conversational AI chatbots have supported access to information during health outbreaks. Unlike traditional bots, [our bots](#) use natural language understanding to create the look and feel of a real conversation. **Shehu** in Nigeria, and **Uji** in the Democratic Republic of Congo are designed to enable people to get accurate answers to their questions on COVID-19 and Ebola. The bots “speak” English, Hausa, and Kanuri (Shehu), and French, Congolese Swahili, Nande and Lingala (Uji), to deliver timely, reliable messages through Facebook Messenger, Telegram, WhatsApp, and SMS.



Instead of menus, users ask questions in whichever language they are most comfortable. They receive up-to-date information, based on Ministry of Health guidance. The bots “listen” to the users – letting them ask questions.

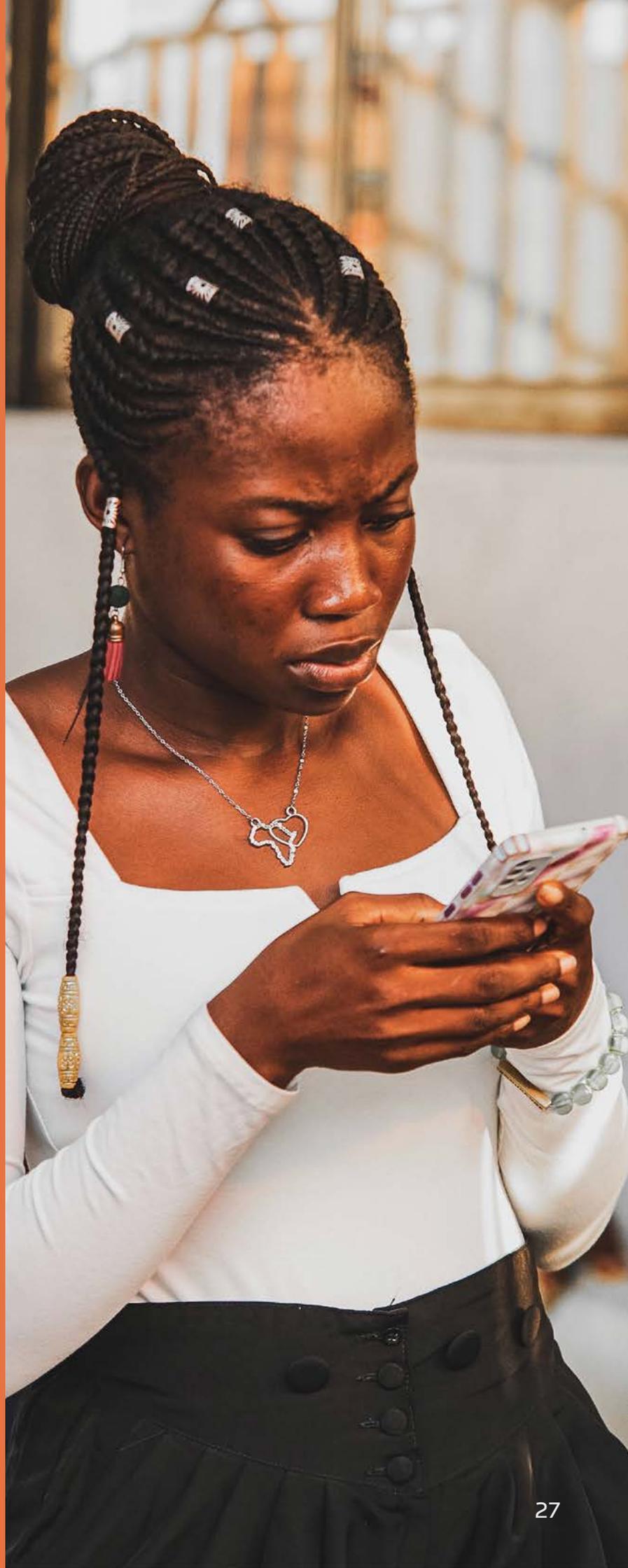
They can also detect new information gaps or concerns from users. For example, Nande speakers were asking Uji if Ebola could be passed from a pregnant mother to her child. Once we reported this trend, the authorities realized that there was no information on mother-to-child transmission and quickly put information out, including through Uji.



The results

- 31 research products that inform the humanitarian community of communication and information challenges, leading to changed humanitarian strategies.
- Our bots engaged in over **100,000 conversations** with more than **10,000 individuals**, earning a remarkable **trust rating of 93%**.
- **1000s of people trained** with a **98% satisfaction rating**.
- Over **4,000** people have downloaded our [language datasets](#)

To achieve the SDGs, it is critical that health information is in the right language and format. In real terms, this means ensuring health care providers can effectively communicate with patients, and that people can get answers to their own questions easily. By promoting language inclusion in health care, we will make significant strides towards leaving no one behind.





What you can do

to multiply your impact

What you can do to multiply your impact

Join CLEAR Global's movement to speak up for language inclusion and help make marginalized voices heard. Your support empowers us to provide access and opportunities to marginalized communities, from those who speak Amharic to Zulu. We're grateful to our whole community, including our sponsors and partners who are helping save lives and promote sustainable development for everyone, everywhere – whatever language they speak. [Learn more and get in touch on clearglobal.org](https://clearglobal.org)



How you can help

Make a direct impact by contributing funds to help us drive specific language inclusion programs and initiatives and enable CLEAR Global to support rapid crisis responses worldwide.

Elevate your corporate social responsibility by sponsoring a language inclusion project or event. Be the beacon of change and inclusivity, and let your brand shine with purpose.

Replace traditional seasonal gift-giving with something extraordinary – establish a matching grant program. Watch as your company doubles the impact of employee donations and help propel our language inclusion efforts to new heights.

Forge a transformative partnership with us. Explore our comprehensive sponsorship recognition and engagement packages. Find the perfect fit for your brand and become a true champion for language inclusion.

Uplift employee engagement by sponsoring a language-inclusive event or workshop. Create unforgettable experiences for your team while advancing our CLEAR Global mission.

Contribute to our cause with in-kind donations. Offer your professional language or technology services pro bono or at reduced rates. Help bridge language gaps and promote understanding for all.

Make language inclusion your legacy. By including CLEAR Global in your will, you can ensure that every voice is heard and every language embraced, even when you're no longer with us. Join us in shaping a future where language is a bridge, not a barrier.

Explore opportunities for joint initiatives that magnify our impact on language inclusion. Together, we can achieve remarkable milestones for our organizations and the communities we serve.

Amplify our “Speak up for language inclusion” campaign on your company’s social media platforms. Be a catalyst for change, inspire others to join the #LanguageInclusion movement and raise awareness about this important work.





**Why you should invest
in language inclusion
to create meaningful
change.**

Why you should invest in language inclusion to create meaningful change.

Invest in language inclusion. It is key to understanding, empowering people to take [climate action](#), and access critical [health care information](#). CLEAR Global has launched a major initiative to bridge the language divide that hinders global progress and sustainable development. We invite strategic supporters that share our vision for equality, and want to make a tangible impact worldwide. Help leave an empowering legacy of understanding for generations to come. [Get in touch today.](#)

\$25

Translates 250 words of key safeguarding, climate change and health messages, making them accessible for people in new emergency contexts

\$50

Records an audio version of a translation to help less literate communities understand vital information

\$100

Helps train a field worker on interpreting during a humanitarian crisis

\$250

Delivers a one-day terminology training session for someone communicating with crisis-affected people

\$500

Contributes to a webinar to help enumerators do an effective needs assessment in a multilingual community

\$1,000

Adapts existing pictorials to a new context in multiple languages, helping people understand vital information

\$1,500

Provides plain language training for 20 aid workers to help them communicate more effectively with crisis-affected people

\$2,000

Helps transform language data for a crisis-affected country into an interactive language map for responders

\$5,000

Develops capacity for a low-resource language, enabling us to recruit and train translators, and build expertise on the language

\$10,000

Helps develop cutting-edge technology and innovative tools for multilingual communications

\$25,000

Helps us expand our activities and scale up our technology to reach more communities around the world.



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